A Weed by Any Other Name...

by AlwaysJohn

Summary

More sweets than the Great British Bake-off. And tea.

Notes

Thinking of all of you, my friends. Be well.

At the tip-toeing of Mrs Hudson approaching the kitchen door, accompanied by the unmistakable sound of a tray being sat on the table that had been inexplicably empty and clean first thing that morning, John, comfortably settled in his chair beside the fireplace, looked up from his book, then glanced at his watch and said not one word.

Three o’clock. Tea time. First the kettle called out, then the china tinkled with tea preparation, and finally, the delectable aromas of tiny sandwiches, scones and pastries wafted out from behind him, each of these indicative of Sherlock’s imminent return.

Soon the outside door opened and closed. Quietly. Unusual for the only consulting detective in the world, definitely the universe. And he’s mine. The thought set a wickedly possessive smile to his lips.

The soft tread of their landlady’s slipper feet faded as she descended the stairs, pausing at the midway landing where a brief moment of unintelligible murmuring ensued. With the conversation’s conclusion, two sets of footsteps traversed the remainder of the seventeen stairs in opposite directions.

“The game is on,” John whispered to himself, and it didn’t require a genius or the instinct of a
soldier doctor to deduce this. John felt it bone-marrow deep. His heart danced in his chest and his mouth blossomed into another wicked grin, this time of great expectations. He ahemed at his own play on words, or whatever it was called. Two can play at this, he decided, turning his gaze back to his book to allow Sherlock to advance his game, whatever it might be.

Out of the corner of his eye, John watched Sherlock approach on silent feet with all the grace of a dancer. Kneeling, he wriggled between John’s legs, leaned closer still to rest one elegant hand on his thigh.

With this intimate overture, John swallowed hard, unable to feign reading any longer. He looked up, and in Sherlock’s kaleidoscopic gaze saw a childlike innocence never displayed for others, but willingly gifted to him alone. His lungs suddenly struggled to take in air.

“John,” Sherlock intoned in his deep baritone; the voice that always made John shiver and caused this heart to beat more than a few extra beats.

“Sh-Sherlock,” he said, tripping over the name as familiar as his own as he noted the mischievous glint in his detective’s eyes, and one hand which remained behind him.

“What have you there? What are you hiding?”

“Very good, John. Very observant.”

“What is it, show me?”

“Patience. First, a bit of a prelude, if you wouldn’t mind.”

John smiled, tried and failed to calm his racing heart. “Ah, of course.”

“After a rather insignificant meeting with my brother at Regent’s, I strolled along a path I’d not taken in some time and came across these,” he said, presenting a small bouquet with an exorbitant flourish.

“Wildflowers,” John whispered, very pleased with the gift presented in a paper coffee cup complete with sufficient water.

“Weeds, really…but they reminded me of you.”

John giggled, not at all insulted; their years together having taught him that he was well-loved by this unpredictable madman.

“How so?” He encouraged with a wave of his hand.

Sherlock offered a shy smile. “Earthy, extraordinary in simplicity, authentic. And only one who thought me good enough to keep.”

“Yes, you are that..a keeper,” John whispered past the catch in his throat.

Intrigued by the shapes and hues, John feathered a finger over each individual blossom.

“Tell me, but not the kingdom, order, family, subfamily, tribe, or genus. Just the ordinary variety name, you know, layman’s terms? Ordinary like me.”

“Layman’s terms, yes, but you are not at all ordinary, John Watson,” Sherlock chastised with a stern look which gentled into a quirky lift to the corner of his mouth.
“Go on.”

“The first two, white clover and dandelion,” he explained as he touched each blossom, “are well known to you as they are everywhere you look.”

“Lovely, especially when they’re all puffy, the dandelions, I mean.”

“Creeping Buttercup is also familiar to you, thought perhaps not the creeping part.”

Sherlock gently touched the next tender blossom. “This cluster of small white flowers is common yarrow, known by many names including soldier’s woundwort.”

“It stops bleeding and prevents infection and it was used in battle for thousands of years to pack wounds. It’s a functional antiseptic, and styptic. Wished I’d had it in Afghanistan.”

“Yes, I suspected you would appreciate this variety.”

John gazed at him, tilting his head in wonder. “Amazing.”

Wearing a tender smile, Sherlock went on to the next blossom. “Even though this one is pale pink, it is named a Scarlet Pimpernel. It’s also called the poor man’s barometer, in that it only opens when the sun shines.”

“Brilliant. And this last one?”

“Mouse-ear Chickweed, the white flower with five petals, each somewhat resembling a mouse’s ear.”

“Sensible name.”

“Yes.”

“Thank you, my love, this sweet bouquet is more beautiful than a rare orchid or the most perfect rose.”

Sherlock scrunched his nose, John’s heart skipped a beat or two. He kissed the little rumple and then his shy smile. “But not as beautiful as you,” he said against the soft and tender lips he loved so much.

The sight of Sherlock’s adorable pink cheeks was just enough to evoke prickles behind John’s eyes. Some days Sherlock still didn’t believe himself lovable, no matter how frequently he was reassured. John vowed to love him even more.

Sherlock opened his mouth to speak, but no words tumbled out. He swallowed hard, closed his eyes for a moment as if to try again. He huffed, then sighed, then shook his head.

“Tea? And scones? He announced, his smile bright and mischievous once more as he pulled John to his feet and kissed him breathless. “With jam?”

“Yes, all right,” John managed between gasps.

“Come to the feast, my conductor of light,” Sherlock murmured against his ear, and folded long fingers around his hand. “My love.”

John could only smile and follow. As he always would.
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